

The Living Archive Of Underground Music

Artist Spotlight: Charles Rice Goff III

Interview Conducted By Don Campau

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What lead you to the tape scene? What year and what circumstances?

Like YOU, Mr. Campau, I was experimenting with home recording long before there was a "tape scene." By the time 1980 rolled around, I was starting to create recordings that I thought had enough appeal to warrant the risk of sharing them with a wider audience than just the folks who happened to visit my apartment from time to time. The hour of music that I compiled was inspired by the powerful theme of "personal love found and personal love lost," and maybe that's just the sort of big force I needed to drive my artistic abilities to their experimental capacities.

So, I put together a cassette album, complete with a 32-page booklet, and distributed it to friends, family, other sonic artists, college and community radio stations, etc. The album was called "Might As Well Beyond Venus" (MAWBV), and it's currently archived online at this location:

<http://www.archive.org/details/MightAsWellBeyondVenus>

Certainly one of the "circumstances" that helped get this project out into the public's hands was that, after years of experimenting, my tape recording skills had at last reached a level of maturity to match their peculiarity. Several of the tracks on MAWBV incorporate a Frippertronics-style tape loop system. All the overdubs and editing were done without a multi-tracking tape recorder. My overdubbing process involved recording music (or sounds) on one two-track reel-to-reel tape recorder, then playing back the tape and performing new material along with it, while recording the "mix" on a second tape recorder through microphones set up in the room. I spent many hours exploring variations in microphone placement, speaker volume, mic input levels, etc., to achieve mixes that properly expressed what I wanted to communicate.

In 1980, there was not yet a thriving tape scene, although there were plenty of home recordings being created, most of which were called "demos" and were intended to grab the attention of people who produced vinyl records. I too, of course, hoped that my tape would find its way to an open-minded experimental record producer. But my cassette was less of a "demo" than it was an "album" all its own, and as it got around and people started giving me feedback, I realized more and more that creating and distributing music by myself was very appealing. I also knew that experimental music had a limited audience, and I was never going to make a living from producing it anyway, so keeping all of the creative and distributional controls in my own hands made a lot of sense.

MAWBV featured a couple of live duet recordings I did with Steve Schaer, and one with Robert Silverman. These were loosely referred to as "-Ing" recordings (the name derived from the English grammar present participle). In 1983, Schaer and I began performing publicly as -Ing. I liberally distributed cassettes of my own solo recordings and -Ing recordings to radio stations, club owners, and other local artists throughout the early 1980's.

But it wasn't until 1986, when Killr "Mark" Kaswan and I compiled the first Disism tape, that I really started participating in what had by then been firmly established: the actual 1980's international "tape scene." The impetus here was that we had a new Taped Rugs act, and I sensed that a much larger audience than I had ever previously interacted with was out there ready to hear our unique compositions. And I wanted to hear what other home recording artists were doing too. Trading around the first Disism tape introduced me to many friends within the home recording world, and, amazingly, several of those friends are still in my address book today. The first

Disism cassette album is archived at the link below:

<http://www.archive.org/details/DisismFirstCassette>

What were the resources you used to make contact with others early on? Sound Choice, Option?

Great segue question, Don, for it was, in fact, Killr Kaswan of Disism who one day brought me a copy of *UNSOUND*: the alternative art/home recording culture magazine published in San Francisco by William Davenport (from the group: Problemist). I actually showed off this very magazine in Andy Kovats' *GRINDSTONE REDUX* documentary about 1980's home recording culture in America (released in 2009 by True Age Media). I notice that you do not have *UNSOUND* currently listed among your collection of home recording-oriented publications from the past, so I'll encourage you to do so right now. It was a fantastic periodical and quite valuable to me personally.

Anyway, this mag was my first "all-in-one" type of resource for making new contacts within the cassette culture. I should mention that I had been sending out contact letters to other artists, independent record producers, radio broadcasters, and nightclub managers for years before Killr gave me this handy little booklet. I possess a couple of writing degrees from UC Berkeley, and I did a considerable bit of freelance work during the early 1980's, so by 1986, writing to potential artistic collaborators was sort of second nature for me. But not until I got a hold of this issue of *UNSOUND* did I have such a voluminous compendium of contact information for home recording artists—all in one publication.

I decided that I should dig this historical document out of my media storage bins and have a look at it to better address your question here, and, boy, am I glad I did! It's been years since I seriously flipped through its pages. The book is all marked up with notes I made about the "tape scene" people to whom I sent out my first wave of contact letters and cassettes. Here's some of the names of the artists and labels who actually responded: Les Ballet Mecaniques (Peirat Serge), Swinging Axe Productions (Randy Greif), Insane Music Contact (Alain Neffe), Cause And Effect (Hal McGee), Staalplaat (Dutch Collective), Old Europa Cafe (Rodolfo Protti), Sound Of Pig (Al Margolis). There's a bunch of radio contacts listed too, along with several scribbles I made about them. The whole book's chalk full of reviews, interviews, advertisements – a veritable treasure chest for someone like myself who was looking to expand his awareness of the avant garde home taping universe.

Of course I did invest in several other home taping-oriented magazines (like the ones you mention in your question) after my initial *found-through-UNSOUND* contacts began to produce some fruits of artistic exchange. I also became particularly inclined to making new contacts by reaching out to artists whose work appeared on compilation cassettes. Many tape labels produced compilations in the 1980's, and they generally provided contact addresses for the artists involved. No matter how good of a review someone may write about a recording, it cannot provide the sort of assessment that one gets from actually listening to the thing personally.

Also I must mention that back in the 1980's, a postal envelope that contained a home-recorded cassette was also usually stuffed with flyers, which bore the descriptions and addresses of avant garde home tapers from all over the world. I found some of these appealing enough to reach out to as well. All in all, in retrospect, I was fortunate that by the time I started actively participating in the "tape scene," there were already plenty of players to interact with, and most of them seemed motivated to expand the culture further. One thing I can't remember, however, is how I discovered YOU, Mr. Campau. I think I might have your first contact letter somewhere in my files, though. I could be persuaded to look for it if you so desired.

You know, I can't remember either how we made contact. But it is easy to see in hindsight why I liked your perspective so much. The variety, the chance taking, the humor and personality... and not only were you "avant garde" but also "pop". Did you ever feel a schism between people doing "experimental " music and those doing rock or pop?

Ha! It seems like somebody should have asked YOU this very same question if they haven't already. From my perspective, the traits of my music that you like are reflected in your own recordings. As for any schisms that I've perceived through people's reactions to my wide-ranging musical styles, the short answer is: yes, there are experimental camps and traditional camps within the home recording culture, but they are far less bellicose than those same two camps which split up artists within society at large.

It's not uncommon for people who are very dedicated to particular art forms and to particular artists to close their minds to other forms of art and to artists with whom they aren't familiar. It's no surprise, then, that some people within the home recording culture have closed minds about certain styles of music or about certain artists. When reviewers have had occasion to express dissatisfaction with the styles of my recordings, I have often felt that their dissatisfaction says more about their own musical tastes than it does about the quality of my music. Because I love variety, and I'm always looking to expand my musical talents, such reviews have sometimes actually challenged me to pursue new artistic courses. In essence, for me, stylistic schisms within the home taping community have been less disturbing than they have been inspiring.

However, in society at large, schisms formed around differences in artistic tastes have often produced genuinely harmful results. When Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* ballet was first performed in Paris in 1913, it caused a riot in the theater because it was so different from the melodic and pastoral ballets that the audience was accustomed to seeing. When the Nazis took control of Germany, they sanctified stoic classical composers like Wagner and Strauss while labeling all modern and jazz composers as *degenerates*. Weill and Schoenberg were literally forced to leave their homeland or face deadly consequences. Tipper Gore's campaign to put warning labels on records helped nurture a musical schism within American society about 25 years ago. Even mild-mannered John Denver testified that such labeling was a bad idea, but the music industry decided to apply the labels anyway, and they still do today. I wonder how many teenagers have been denied the right to explore the edges of musical expression as a result of this schism?

So anyway, it seems to me that the camps of experimentalists and traditionalists within the home recording culture don't cause anywhere near the sorts of trouble that these camps cause in society at large. Most of the home tapers that I've interacted with over the years project an attitude of open-minded enthusiasm that is uncommonly refreshing. What other sorts of people could produce so many eclectic compilation tapes and radio shows over the course of so many years? These smorgasbord collections, stocked up with so many styles and non-styles of music, are a big part of what the home recording culture has always been about. Sure there are preferences and prejudices out there in there in the home recording universe, and sometimes reviewers' opinions are more apparent than their social graces, but it seems to me that these schisms are natural and pretty harmless.

The big picture for us home recording artists is that the very nature of our art pits all of us against society's traditional institutions and power-brokers. This is the schism that matters, because it has been and still is harmful to us. Don't forget that home-recorded music once had to be smuggled at tremendous risk out of countries on the east side of the Berlin Wall. Remember how, in the 1980's, the music industry tried to get American legislators to tax cassettes, basically claiming that they had the right to profit from anything that was recorded. They actually succeeded in getting such a law passed in Canada, and not long ago, they got the Canadian government to tax CDRs, DVDs, and MP3 players too! Today, the governments of several

countries deny their own people free access to the internet. I'd venture to say that there's a host of home recording artists out there who will never get a chance to read this very interview. So yeah, we home recording artists do have some differences in taste and manners, but we share a powerfully unifying camaraderie that makes for the sort of community I'm happy to be a part of.

Well put and analogized. Let's change gears for a second and talk about gear. I don't normally feel the need to discuss equipment but you've been doing this for a very long time and have probably gone through an evolution of recording gear. Maybe sketch out what you've used and how the equipment itself has influenced your material.

Anal-ogized, yes, ha ha! My retentive pucker is on full display here.

Regarding my recording gear, you are quite correct that I've used a lot of different devices over the years to capture and manipulate sounds. These magical tools of technology have not only shaped and re-shaped the vast number of recordings that Taped Rugs Productions has released over the years, but they've also shaped most of the live performances that I've been involved in as well. I've actually discussed this subject quite a bit in previous interviews, so I'll try not to get too verbose here and instead provide some internet links to fill in the details.

First off, I cannot even mentally count up all the recording devices that I've possessed throughout the course of my life. My fascination with recording music and other sounds began around 1962, when my Dad got a monophonic reel-to-reel tape recorder for Christmas. I was four years old then. From the perspective of my little kid brain, this thing was like Tinker Bell's Magic Wand. My parents wouldn't let me mess around with it by myself though, so after years of pestering, they bought me a Panasonic portable cassette deck in 1970. I recorded literally everything with that cassette deck. It's no wonder that "found sounds" have always played such a big part in my compositions. Also, a couple of years after I acquired this portable, I actually started experimenting with cooking up my first crude overdubbed recordings, using it in conjunction with my parents' aforementioned reel-to-reel deck. (Both me and the reel-to-reel were a little older then, so my folks were less apprehensive about me playing with it...)

About seven or eight years later I used my own hard-earned cash to buy a couple of stereo reel-to-reel decks: a new Pioneer 707 and a used Sony TC-630. It was with these two tape recorders that I produced the overdubbed pieces and Frippertronics-style recordings that I described before in my answer to your first question. I used these two tape recorders not just to capture sounds, but to manipulate sounds as well. Playing around with feedback, physically grabbing the tape during recordings, altering pitches with the speed controls, cutting into previously recorded tapes with new sounds, etc., produced results unlike anything I'd ever heard, and I loved those edgy results! In retrospect, I think I was literally defining the term "experimental music" in my own way in those days. All of my musically-inclined friends, of course, were invited to share in these experiments too. And, as I mentioned previously, this all served to give birth to the Taped Rugs project called "-Ing." The following links lead to some of the recordings made during my first years of tape experimenting, and to some details about how they were made:

<http://www.archive.org/details/TapeRecordingExperimentsSeventies>

<http://www.archive.org/details/EarlySonicExperiments>

<http://www.archive.org/details/TapeLoopExperiments>

The Sony and the Pioneer decks did not always run at the same speed, which literally meant that any recording made when the decks were used together to mimic a Frippertronics-style tape loop system, could never be more than a one-off experiment. In late 1982, I acquired another Pioneer

707. When I started doing Frippertronics using two identical tape recorders, each equipped with a pitch control that could vary the tape speed with some degree of delicacy, the possibilities for making Frippertronics recordings with consistent qualities were realized. It wasn't long after that that Steve Schaer and I started to learn how to recreate some of the more interesting improvised tape loop bits that we recorded. At this point I also started experimenting with penning notated music for tape loops. These "evolutions" led to -Ing being able to actually perform live sets of preconceived compositions through a Frippertronics-style tape loop system. We took this show on the road and played all sorts of places in the Bay Area in 1983 and 1984. The following links lead to some of the recordings made at -Ing's live performances:

<http://www.archive.org/details/INGonTourNineteenEightyThree>

<http://www.archive.org/details/INGinterDada>

In 1985, -Ing had burned itself out, and I started working with Killr "Mark" Kaswan in the duo: Disism. The first Disism recordings used the same Frippertronics system that -Ing had used, but it also incorporated a stereo cassette deck into its mix. Basically, Killr and I created precisely-timed cassette tapes, which we played into our tape loop compositions to add sounds, voices, instruments, etc., at preconceived points within the songs. As Disism progressed through the rest of the 1980's, Killr and I composed cassette tapes to insert audio bits more randomly into our tape loop compositions. The following links lead to some of the recordings made at -Disism's live performances:

<http://www.archive.org/details/LivePerformancesFrom1986And1987>

<http://www.archive.org/details/AbjectAndUnusualFestivalNoStairs>

<http://www.archive.org/details/PerformanceVideos19861988> (video)

All throughout the 1980's, a parade of various musicians would gather from time to time at the Taped Rugs Studio and other locations to record improvised Frippertronics. The tapes from these sessions were saved, and many of them were later released to the public on cassette albums as products of the loose-knit group: Herd Of The Ether Space (HOTES). By the end of the 1980's, the Taped Rugs Frippertronics system was starting to suffer from years of abuse, and HOTES was starting to expand its stylistic approaches. Thus, in 1989, Taped Rugs produced a few recordings made on a stereo cassette deck through a no frills mixer, blending all sorts of elements, including live instruments, modified record albums, and pre-recorded tapes. The natural follow-up to this method of recording was my acquisition of a four-track cassette recorder in December of that year.

Right out the box, this Tascam Porta Studio 05 was used not only to record and mix music, but to manipulate and alter recorded sounds. Tapes were slowed down, sped up, recorded backwards, panned in psychedelic patterns, etc. Also, because there was no looping involved in making four track recordings, there was much less feedback to deal with, so a whole host of acoustic instruments and live vocals started to appear on Taped Rugs productions around the beginning of the 1990's. Built-in equalizing controls on the deck helped create a cleaner sound quality than what could be achieved by the hissy Frippertronics tapes as well.

The four track recorder was particularly valuable to me as a solo artist. For the first time in my life I could create recordings composed from four very clear "line-in" overdubs, and I could bounce together tracks to create even more overdubs if I so desired. From 1990-2000, nearly every Disism, Herd Of The Ether Space, Goff Solo, and Turkey Makes Me Sleepy recording was in some way composed using that Tascam recorder. Herd Of The Ether Space and Turkey Makes Me Sleepy also used the Tascam to mix and record live performances.

Actually, when I joined up with Eric Matchett and Michael Adams to form Turkey Makes Me

Sleepy in 1997, all three of us had four track cassette decks, which allowed us to get very creative with our recorded compositions. We produced two cassette albums on which each piece was a collaged mix of three tracks, each track having been created by a different member of the group at a unique time and in a unique place.

The following links lead to recordings which were composed using the Tascam four track recorder:

<http://www.archive.org/details/OtherThanRandomModulation>

<http://www.archive.org/details/VolatileVolitions>

<http://www.archive.org/details/MyFirstAdventureInto3-d>

In the early 21st Century, I introduced digital recording and computer editing technology to the Taped Rugs studio. I started out using Sound Forge software, then around 2004 switched over to Cool Edit Pro, which I still use now. Going from analog to digital did not mean that tape recordings were completely discarded from my box of composing tools, however. Throughout the last decade, I have often used tape recordings to augment both my studio and my live recordings, and I don't foresee myself ever totally breaking this lifelong habit.

That said, I must praise the technicians of our modern world for having developed digital recording and computer technology. They have made it possible for me to create some very polished productions over the last ten years. Now I can overdub to my heart's content without sacrificing sound quality. I can edit up sound phrases with ultra precision, to the point that if even one syllable of a vocal line is unsatisfactory, I can either eliminate it or replace it. I can copy musical phrases, alter each copy in a different way with sound effects, then layer them together into other recordings. I can reduce unwanted noises like hiss, pops, and crackle without damaging the sound qualities of other elements within recordings. All of these abilities and more have had a considerable impact on my 21st Century musical portfolio.

I wouldn't say that switching from tape recording to computer recording has been a smooth transition, however. Just as each tape recorder has its own unique quirks and qualities, each bit of computer audio software is similarly unique, and each has its own unique learning curve to climb before its potential qualities can be realized. It's taken me years to develop the skills that I now possess for recording and composing on a computer. I offer you and your readers the opportunity to judge the progress of my abilities. When I had finished putting together the **Whirledly** CDR album in 2002, I thought that I had achieved my ultimate goals for composition and recording quality. A lot of people made very encouraging comments about this album. At the end of 2009, I felt the same way about the CDR album that I had just finished then: **Diminutive Dispatches**, and a lot of people made the same sorts of encouraging comments about it. Now I'm trying to extend my range even farther, and with the comments that I've been getting on my very recent recordings, I think I'm succeeding. The following links lead to Whirledly, to Diminutive Dispatches, and to some of my newest recordings posted on Tapegerm:

<http://www.archive.org/details/Whirledly>

<http://www.archive.org/details/DiminutiveDispatches>

<http://www.tapegerm.com/jamroom/bands/931/> (specifically from the first piece down through *Apple Blackberry Smoothy*)

There are, of course, a lot other factors involved in the evolution of Taped Rugs music over the years, but you definitely called forth a big one by asking about the relationship between my ever-changing recordings and the technologies with which they were made. I guess I should probably mention one more little recording device before I'm done though. In late 2007, I bought a Boss

RC 20X Loop Station loop duplicator. This thing, of course, only records short sound phrases temporarily, so they can be replayed in concert with other phrases during live performances. Such qualities, however, make it a digital facsimile of a Frippertronics tape loop system, and it has allowed me not only to perform orchestrated improvisations as a solo artist, but has also made it possible for me to perform some of the old –Ing and Disism pieces for live audiences. Here's a couple of links for anyone interested in observing the magic that this little tool has helped me create:

<http://www.archive.org/details/Somnolency>

<http://www.archive.org/details/FertilizerThatSweetensTheSoil> (video)

Not only have you done mail collaborations with other home producers but you have actually traveled to where they live and performed and recorded with them. You did a huge tour of the southwest in 2007 (I believe) and culled several albums of material from it. Did you have expectations of the results before you did this? And how did it measure up to those expectations?

Ah yes, it was actually in June of 2006, and appropriately dubbed: the ***Taped Rugs 06 06 Tour Of The Southeast USA***. A huge amount of fun it was! I hauled myself, my Mahalo Ukulele, my Barbie Violin, an old Casio SA-5 keyboard, a Yamaha FX 500 effects unit, and a few other odds and ends to North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee. I got to meet and create improvised musical wonders with the likes of Bret Hart, Ed Shepherd, Scotty Irving, Dave Fuglewicz, Andrew Chadwick, and Chris Phinney. I also got to spend a few days and some quality recording time with Hal McGee, with whom I'd had the pleasure of sharing similar interactions a couple of times previously. All of these generous people and their families went out of their ways to provide me with shelter, food, entertainment, and the sort of mythical Southern Hospitality that I'd always heard about. Also during my adventures, an old friend from California put me up in Nashville for a while and provided me a good bit of valuable advice for exploring the local environs.

Anyway, the culling of the recordings from the tour did not really create "several albums," but instead, produced a sort of unboxed set (a bagged set) of seven CDRs, a video DVD, and a photocopied little booklet. Jerry Kranitz of Aural Innovations was nice enough to review the whole collection and interview me about the tour a couple of months after I had returned to Kansas. In 2009, I archived the recordings from the tour on the internet. They, along with Jerry's interview, can easily be accessed from the link below:

<http://tapedrugs.com/TapedRugs0606TourArchive.html>

As for expectations, hmmm, I guess my only expectations were that I was going to meet and record noises with some people who I'd been trading and collaborating with for several years previous. And those expectations were certainly fulfilled. One thing about the results that I wasn't expecting to encounter was the variety of different recording devices that ended up documenting all the improv sessions that took place during the trip. These included:

- a portable stereo cassette recorder
- a micro cassette recorder
- a four track cassette recorder
- a digital camera
- a few computers
- a direct-to-disk CDR recorder
- a semi-functional 8 track direct-to-zip disk recorder

True to the laws of crazy happenstance, the very first recording made during the tour, created at Bret Hart's house, came out so distorted that we couldn't even recognize it as our own playing! Later, we got Scotty Irving (Clang Quartet) to dub some drum tracks over that one in a recording studio, and the results ended up sounding unlike anything else that's ever been on a Taped Rugs release.

The best part of this trip for me personally, however, was that it solidified some lifelong friendships with people who I'd always admired and enjoyed communicating with from afar.

Along with Zan Hoffman, you are truly one of the most adventurous and prolific creators in underground music and have been for many years. What keeps you interested and creating?

Prolific, yes, I think that's an accurate assessment, Mr. C. And you know; I don't just record music, but I write and photograph and compose computer graphics and produce videos and create a bunch of other stuff too. And, just like in my musical productions, in all of these other artistic endeavors I always seem to be expanding my stylistic approaches. I don't think a lot about why I create all of this stuff; it just seems that I'm driven to do it by forces that are beyond my understanding. However, I have, from time to time, speculated on my motivations.

My family used to tell me that back when I was very young, I would entertain guests at the dinner table with little hand dances from my high chair (rather than eat my meals). These exhibitions must have produced laughter from onlookers, which encouraged me to carry on performing such silly antics throughout my early life (although I don't personally remember anything about it). I'm guessing that I had some sort of primal need to communicate the simple joys I felt as a baby, and not being able to speak, I discovered an effective way of getting my messages across. It seems only natural that the nurturing of this sort of behavior would encourage me to explore other non-traditional methods of communication, which is the very essence of my art.

Clearly some sort of primal need to communicate is revealed by the huge quantity of art that I've produced over the course of my life. There's always a sentiment or idea in my brain clawing to get out: an expression of love, of thanks, of mockery, of praise, of nonsense, of protest, etc. I should add that the act of collaborating with other musicians is a unique form of communication too, and I apparently have a need to perform this activity on a regular enough basis to keep me from falling into a sort of withdrawal as well.

However, while I believe that my inner needs for expression have been a motivation behind my creative exuberance, I don't think that they are the only factors fueling my artistic engines. I have a tendency to get bored easily. For me, the act of creating things takes away that boredom in a way that nothing else can. Even though modern society has provided me with all sorts of ways to be entertained, my thirst for meaningful distraction often seems unfulfilled by these offerings. So I make up my own forms of entertainment. Of course, sooner or later, I get bored with my own creations too, which drives me to cook up new ones. Over the years, it's just gone on and on like that, sort of akin to heroin addiction.

I'm sure that another motivation behind my prolific creative output is frustration. I have, like anyone else, often been forced into uncomfortable situations that my own meager capacities as a human being have been unable to alter. My artistic endeavors sort of fool me into believing that I'm putting a bit of order into the entropy that makes life so consistently challenging. I discovered long ago that by creating something of my own, I could achieve near-omnipotent control over a tiny speck of the universe, and experiencing such god-like power has often helped me to keep my spirits up during otherwise depressing circumstances. Similarly, the art that I've produced during frustrating times has often helped me to face down the sources of my frustrations with dramatically therapeutic results.

So how could I not have become literally addicted to creating art, when it's provided me with so many rewards over the years? I simply seem to have no other choice than to be artistically prolific.

Would you call yourself a perfectionist? Do you want your ideas to come out exactly as you might envision them?

There is no doubt that I'm very meticulous and downright anal retentive about a lot of things, including my artistic endeavors. I often pursue the fullest potentials of my undertakings. Of course, I'm a mere human being, possessing only a limited tool box of talents and technologies, so there's been plenty of times when I've been ill-equipped to achieve these full potentials. Also, sadly, my attitudes about "doing the job right" have on more than one occasion created some uncomfortable social interactions. That said; I'll take the opportunity right now to apologize to anyone whose been around when the worst of my anal retentive tendencies have gotten off their leashes.

For me, pursuing artistic potentials usually means that I have to experiment with all sorts of variables and judge each one individually. This process can easily require many hours or many days before I feel comfortable about making any tangible decisions. And because I know from experience that I can't always trust the decisions that I make when I've been intensely working on a project, I usually allow a period of at least a day before making any "final" choices. More often than not, I end up doing a little more tweaking before, at last, I can give in and say, "I'm done."

Like any artist, I also reevaluate my own work from time to time, which inevitably leads to me to form mixed opinions about it. Because, over the last couple of years, I have been archiving the 200-plus albums produced by Taped Rugs, there have been a few occasions when I was moved to do some actual remastering of old recordings. But I've approached this process very thoughtfully too, and only have committed to changes after I've evaluated them a few times. I firmly believe that an evaluator's mood and the environment that he or she is surrounded by when observing a piece of art has a significant effect on the evaluator's opinions. I like to view things from different angles to test their strengths and weaknesses. I used to use drugs to offer myself instantly-achieved different points of view, which sped-up my editing processes. Now I just let time pass, and that seems to work pretty well, although maybe a bit slower. My need to be sure that what I've created has been pushed to its potentials may rightly define me as a *perfectionist*, but I sort of see myself more as an *obsessionist*, more a slave to my inner drives than a master of my options.

As for "wanting my ideas to come out exactly as I envision them," that's usually not the way my mind works when I'm creating art, although this desire sometimes does come into play when I'm performing or putting on public displays. I'm an experimenter and an adventurer at heart, so surprises and discoveries are frequently more satisfying to me than preconceived results. Because the nature of my art often strays far from the mainstream, my audiences are generally oblivious to anything that I might view as falling short of its potentials. Still, I never like feeling that in some way I've not provided onlookers with a blue ribbon experience. I'll add that I'm a big believer in taking advantage of my mistakes, and I usually am able to squeeze a little blood from even the most flawed of my stones.

Because you are so active, do you have much time to listen to other music? Do you even want to after such an immersion into your own? And what music would it be if you did have time or interest? Perhaps also mention a couple of your strongest influences.

Let me kick this answer off by saying that I listen to a lot of music every day. I listen to music when I'm write email messages (I'm listening to *Plastic Dreams* by The Modern Jazz Quartet

right now.). I listen to music when I take baths. I listen to music when I clean the house. I listen to music when I nap. I listen to music when I'm in the car. I listen to music when I sculpt computer graphics. I listen to music when I watch baseball games on TV. You get the idea here.

When I'm listening to my own music during any of these activities, I get a bit distracted evaluating it, as you might expect from my response to your previous question. A little distraction of this sort is desirable sometimes, but not always. As I'm sure is the case for most modern audiophiles, my listening choices are dictated by my moods and by the tasks I'm performing while listening. Because my moods take regular swings as I go about my regimen of daily activities, it's a good thing that I have a large collection of vinyl records, CDRs, DVDs, and, of course, cassette tapes. Over the last couple of years I've been taking more and more advantage of the internet's giant jukebox of audio offerings as well.

All of this listening constantly reminds me of how lucky I am to be living in the modern world. I can't even imagine the deprivation before the 20th Century, when even the most technically-advanced audiophiles could only satisfy their musical passions by attending the few live performances that were held within the traveling ranges of their horses and buggies. Certainly, in those days, a select group of talented individuals were gifted enough to be able to interpret sheet music or folkloric standards for themselves and their friends on a piano or a guitar, but compared to the convenience of clicking a computer mouse, such private recitals involved considerable effort and provided very limited listening choices.

I just went over to my turntable to replace *Plastic Dreams* with the first album by the Vince Guaraldi Trio. It boggles my mind that only fifty years before this record was produced, people in the so-called "civilized world" were just beginning to listen regularly to recorded music. My wife and I purchased a 1927 Victrola last summer, and I've started collecting 78's to play on it that were recorded mechanically, through funnels and horns, before studios were equipped with electronic microphones. There's a lot of soul on these old records, hokey as their themes might seem today. Listening to them on an old wind-up record player is like taking a trip in a time machine. These little travels through time have not only recently been providing me a lot of perspective on the subject of recording, but they also have been helping me envision the day-to-day living of the early 20th Century in a way that books and photographs have never been able to do.

As far as me offering you a sweeping generalization about the sorts of recordings that are most pleasing to my ears, I find that every genre has something appealing about it, but few artists are able to channel those appealing elements into works that bring me a real sense of listening satisfaction. The producers of the recordings that I really like do more than just orchestrate a blend of coordinated rhythms, melodies, and other noises. They provoke me to think, they move me emotionally, and they alter their approaches to composition enough to keep me from getting bored. I'm also very fond of recordings which bypass genre altogether and get right to the heart of their intents through unique, organic presentations. Home recording artists seem particularly adept at cooking up such non-genre productions.

For the sake of your readers, it's probably not a good idea for me to start listing the artists who have influenced me over the years, because it's a pretty long list, and it would take many pages for me to explain how they each have influenced me in so many dramatically different ways. Instead, I'll provide you this list of ten albums which have made absolutely indelible impressions on my brain cells (of course, there are more than ten of these, but I think this list says a lot about my influences):

The Velvet Underground & Nico by The Velvet Underground, 1967

The Beatles (double White album) by the Beatles, 1968

Song Cycle by Van Dyke Parks, 1968

Uncle Meat by The Mothers Of Invention, 1969

A Wizard, A True Star by Todd Rundgren, 1973

Wizzard's Brew by Roy Wood's Wizzard, 1973
Here Come The Warm Jets by Brian Eno. 1973
Exposure by Robert Fripp, 1979
Peter Gabriel (3rd solo album) by Peter Gabriel, 1980
The Residents Commercial Album by The Residents, 1980

Always fascinating for me to see a particular artist's list. To me, these all make sense when I look at your body of work. OK, last question, what are your current projects and also your long range goals, if any. And one main URL for our readers to go to.

Ah, you've hit it on the head! Just what the heck am I up to right now? Really good question, because, for the last few months, I've been wondering about this myself!

I can tell you that recently I've been working on some very short, highly produced recordings, including the ones on TapeGerm that I mentioned in response to your question about the influences of recording gear. This ongoing collection of megawatt miniatures was kicked-off by my first contribution to Hal McGee's **International Email Audio Art Project**. I'm guessing that most of your readers are aware of Hal's newest series of compilations, so I won't go into any detail describing it. I recently submitted another little robust recording to this series, which will appear (or has appeared) on Volume #5. And, at the time of this writing, I've cooked up yet one more of these mighty miniatures as a 2010 year-end offering to one and all, available at the link below:

http://www.archive.org/details/CarolOfTheBells_294

I expect I'll be creating a few more productions in this style in the near future and eventually releasing them altogether on a CDR album.

There is only one other audio project in my plans for the relative future, and, because it has yet to bear any fruit, I hesitate to mention it here. But I will anyway! I'm thinking about interpreting a collection of songs composed around the beginning of the 20th Century. This period has always been a source of inspiration for me, and my recent acquisition of a Victrola has added a bit of fuel to this fire. Back in 1998, I did a cassette album of hymns originally published in 1906:

(<http://www.archive.org/details/LastingHymns>) In 2006, I brought together a large group of people in Lawrence, Kansas, to participate in a multimedia interactive celebration of Dadaism:

(<http://www.archive.org/details/ACelebrationOfInternationalDadaism>). As for this upcoming early 20th Century project, its parameters are currently quite indistinct, but I'm pretty sure that **The Great War** will play a significant role.

I started working on a new literary project a few months ago. I got about 20,000 words into it; then stalled out. I haven't been motivated to start working on it again, but I probably will at some point in the next year. This fable-in-process is developing into something more akin to Voltaire's **Candide** than to Bissinger's **Friday Night Lights**, but the following draft paragraph from Chapter Eight shows that, in this story, anything is possible:

Once the referee blew his whistle and started the clock, the Gators went into action. Theodore's job as longback was to use his spoon to deliver gobs of vile-smiling garbage to the linemen up front, who then ran around the crowd with transparent bucketfuls of the trash, forcing spectators to look at the nasty material and to breathe in its appalling aroma. Several Gators players beat a steadily increasing rhythm on tympanic drums as the play built to a frenzy. Theodore could sense that the crowd was becoming agitated and excited. As the throng's yelling got louder and louder, Theodore spooned up the garbage faster and faster. The sight and smell of the decaying waste disturbed Theodore's own senses to the point that he himself wanted nothing more than to bag up

all the trash in dark brown plastic and take it somewhere very far away.

All right, well don't dwell on that paragraph too long...

As for the rest of my unplanned future, I'm certain that in the coming year I'll be moved to record some new solo improvisations to add to my **Uncooked** series of releases (<http://tapedrugs.com/CGoffIIIArchiveDD.html>), but I have no commitments at this point to collaborating with anyone. I encourage any of your readers who might be interested in working with me to get in touch. I'm not really up for just doing a collab for the sake of doing a collab, however. I'm looking for new themes to explore, based either on unique compositional approaches or on unusual subject materials — things that no one else has tried before. Anyone interested in dedicating themselves to a genuine challenge, please make contact.

My internet home is:

www.tapedrugs.com

Thanks very much, Don, for showing so much interest in my work over the years, and for giving me this opportunity to talk a bit about it with your readers. Your **Living Archive** is a treasure for the world, and I feel privileged to be a part of it.

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